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## SPIECH

## OF

## ROBERT EMMET,

IN THE

## COURT-HOUSE, DUBLIT,

AFTER SENTENCE OF DEATH BEING PASSED ON HIM, SEPTEMBER 19, 1803.


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## NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

The following translation of Emmet's world-famed speech wis made somewhat under difficulties, as I had not all the books necessary for such an undertaking; and there probably is not in the English language a more difficult piece to translate, correctly. into Gaelic. The first requisite of a translation is to have it as literal as possible. This translation is as literal as the genius of the Irish language would admit. The very tenses of the English. verbs are in every case put into the corresponding lrish ones; and every word that Emmet uttered has been translated as closely as possible. There are a few nouns the genders of which I have been unable to find out, as authorities do not agree with regard to them. One of these nouns is Majゥal. O'Reilly makes it masculine, and Foley makes it feminine; but the use of a wrong gender in Irish does not make much change in the parts of speech qualifying the noun, and is not so grave a fault as it would be in some other languages. T. O'N. R.

New York, March, 1879.

As an aid to readers of the Gaelic translation, the original of Emmet's immortal speech, as delivered by him in the Court-House, Green street, Dublin, on the 19th of September, 1803, is reprinted on the opposite pages to the translation,-both being given as nearly as possible, line for line, in juxtaposition.


#### Abstract

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SPEECH
OF

## ROBERTE道道ET, IN THE

 COURT-HOUSE, DUBLIN,Afreiz Sentevoe of Death being Passed on Him, September 19, 1803.


# Translated from Enguise Into Irisif 

BY
T. $O^{\prime} N . \quad$ R USSELLL,
March 4, 1879.

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## SPEECH OF ROBERT EMMET

In the Courthouse, Dublin, after Sentenoe of Deati being passed on him, September 19, 1803.
"What have I to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced on me, according to law? I have nothing to say which can alter your predetermination, nor that it would become me to say, with any view to the mitigation of that sentence which you are here to pronounce, and by which I must abide. But I have that to say which interests me more than life, and which you have labored, as was necessarily your office, in the present circumstances of this oppressed country, to destroy. I have much to say why my reputation should be rescued from the load of false accusation and calumny which has been heaped upon it. . I do not imagine that, seated where you are, your minds can be so free from impurity as to receive the least impression from what I am about to utter. I have no hope that I can anchor my character in the breast of a court constituted and trammelled as this is. I only wish, and it is the utmost I expect, that your lordships may suffer it to float down your memories untainted by the foul breath of prejudice, until it finds some more hospitable harbor to shelter it from the rude storm by which it is at present buffetted. Were I only to suffer death, after being adjudged guilty by your tribunal, I should bow in silence, and meet the fate that arvaits me without a murmur; but the sentence of the law which delivers my body to the executioner will, through the ministry of that law, labor in its own vindication, to consign my character to obloquy; for there must be guilt somewhere,-whether in the sentence of the court, or in the catastrophe, posterity must determine. A man in my situation, my lords, has not only to encounter the difficulties of fortune, and







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the force of power over minds which it has corrupted or subjugated, but the difficulties of established prejudice. The man dies, but his memory lives. That mine may not perish,--that it may live in the respect of my countrymen,-I seize upon this opportunity to vindicate myself from some of the charges alleged against me. When my spirit shall be wafted to a more friendly port-when my shade shall have joined the bands of those martyred heroes who have shed their blood on the scaffold and in the field in defence of their country and of virtue, this is my hope;-I wish that my memory and name may animate those who survive me, while I look down with complacency on the destruction of that perfidious government which upholds its domination by blasphemy of the Most High-which displays its power over man, as over the beasts of the forest-which sets man upon his brother, and lifts his hand, in the name of God, against the throat of his fellow who believes or doubts a little more or a little less than the government standard-a government which is steeled to barbarity by the cries of the orphans, and the tears of the widows which it has made."
[Here he was brutally interrupted by Lord Norbury, and told that weak and wicked enthusiasts, who felt like him, were unequal to the accomplishment of their wild designs.]
"I appeal to the immarulate God-I swear by the throne of Heaven, before which I must shortly appear-by the blood of the murdered patriots who have gone before me-that my conduct has been, through all this peril, and through all my purposes, governed only by the convictions which I have uttered, and by no other view than that of the emancipation of my country from the superinhuman oppression under which she has so long and patiently travailed; and I confidently and assuredly hope that, wild and chimerical as it may appear, there is still union and strength in Ireland to accomplish this noblest enterprise. Of this I speak with the confidence of intimate knowledge, and with the consolation that appertains to that confidence. Think not, my lords, I say this for the petty gratification of giving you a transitory uneasiness. A man who never yet raised his voice to assert a lie, will not hazard his character with posterity by




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asserting a falsehood on a subject so important to his country, and on an occasion like this. Yes, my lords, a man who does not wish to have his epitaph written until his country is liberated, will not leave a weapon in the power of envy, nor a pretence to impeach the probity which he means to preserve, even in the grave, to which tyranny consigns him."

## [Here Lord Norbury again interrupted him.]

> " Again I say, that what I have spoken was not intended for your lordship, whose situation I commisserate rather than envy. My expressions were for my countrymen. If there is a true Irishman present, let my last words cheer him in the hour of his affliction-"

[Lord Norbury again stopped the prisoner.]
"I have always understood it to be the duty of a judge, when a prisoner has been convicted, to pronounce the sentence of the law. I have also understood that judges sometimes think it their duty to hear with patience, and to speak with humanity; to exhort the victim of the laws, and to offer, with tender benignity, their opinions of the motives by which he was actuated in the crime of which he was adjudged guilty. That a judge has thought it his duty so to have done, I have no doubt; but where is the boasted freedom of your institu-tions-where the vaunted impartiality, clemency and mildness of your courts of justice, if an unfortunate prisoner, whom your policy, and not pure justice, is about to deliver into the hands of the executioner, is not suffered to explain his motives sincerely and truly, and to vindicate the principles by which he was actuated? My lords, it may be a part of the system of angry justice to bow a man's mind by humiliation to the supposed ignominy of the scaffold; but worse to me than the purposed shame, or the scaffold's terrors, would be the shame of such foul and unfounded imputations as have been laid against me in this court. You, my lord, are a judge; I am the supposed culprit. I am a man; you are a man also. By a revolution of power we might change places, though we never could change


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characters. If I stand at the bar of this court and dare not vindicate my character, what a farce is your justice! If I stand at this bar and dare not vindicate my character, how dare you calumniate it! Does the sentence of death which your unhallowed policy inflicts upon my body, also condemn my tongue to silence and my reputation to reproach? Your executioner may abridge the period of my existence; but while I exist, I shall not forbear to vindicate my character and motives from aspersion; as a man, to whom fame is dearer than life, I will make the last use of that life in doing justice to that reputation which is to live after me, and which is the only legacy I can leave to those I honor and love, and for whom I am proud to perish. As men, my lord, we must appear on the great day at one common tribunal; and it will then remain for the Searcher of all hearts to show a collective Universe, who
 motives-my country's oppressors, or-"
[Here he was again stopped.]
"My lord, shall a dying man be denied the legal privilege of exculpating himself in the eyes of the community from an undeserved reproach, thrown upon him during his trial, by charging him with ambition, and attempting to cast away for a paltry consideration the liberties of his country! Why did your lordship insult me?-rr rather, why insult justice, in demanding of me why sentence of death should not be pronounced ? I know, my lord, that the form prescribes that you should ask the question. The form also presumes the right of answaring. This, no doubt, may be dispensed with, and so might the whole ceremony of the trial, since sentence was already pronounced at the Castle before your jury were empanelled. Your lordships are but the priests of the oracle. I submit to the sacrifice, but I insist on the whole of the forms.
"I am charged with being an emissary of France. An emissary of France!-and for what end? It is alleged that I wished to sell the independence of my country;-and for what end? Was this the object















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of my ambition? And is this the mode by which a tribunal of justice reconciles contradictions? No; I am no emissary; my ambition was to hold a place among the deliverers of my country-not in power, not in profit, but in the glory of the achievement. Sell my country's independence to France!-and for what? A change of masters? No, but for my ambition! Oh, my country! was it personal ambition that influenced me? Had it been the soul of my actions, could I not, by my education and fortune, by the rank and consideration of my family, have placed myself amongst the proudest of your oppressors? My country was my idol. To it I sacrificed every selfish, every endearing sentiment ; and, for it I now offer myselt, O God! No, my lords; I acted as an Irishman, determined on delivering my country from the yoke of a foreign and unrelenting tyranny, and from the more galling yoke of a domestic faction, its joint partner and perpetrator in the patricide, whose reward is the ignominy of existing with an exterior of splendor and a consciousness of depravity. It was the wish of my heart to extricate my country from this doubly-rivetted despotism. I wish to place her independence beyond the reach of any power on earth. I wish to exalt her to that proud station in the world which Providence has destined her to fill. Connection with France was, indeed, intended, butonly so far as mutual interest would sanction or require. Were the French to assume any authority inconsistent with the purest independence, it would be the signal for their destruction. We sought their aid-and we sought it-as we had assurances we should obtain it-as auxiliaries in war and allies in peace. Were the French to come, uninvited by the people, as invaders or enemies, I should oppose them to the utmost of my strength. Yes! my countrymen, I should advise you to meet them on the beach with a sword in one hand, and a torch in the other. I would meet them with all the destructive fury of war; and I would animate my countrymen to immolate them in their boats before they had contaminated the soil of my country. If they succeeded in landing, and if forced to retire before


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superior discipline, I would dispute every inch of ground, raze every house, burn every blade of grass; the last spot on which the hope of freedom should desert me, there would; I hold; and the last entrenchment of liberty should be my grave. What I could not do myself, in my fall, I should leave as a last charge to my countrymen to accomplish; because I should feel conscious that life, any more than death, is dishonorable when a foreign nation holds my country in subjection. But it was not as an enemy that the succors of France were to land. I looked, indeed, for the assistance of France; I wished to prove to France and to the world that Irishmen deserved to be assisted-that they were indignant at slavery, and ready to assert the independence and liberty of their country; I wished to procure for my country the guarantee which Washington procured for America-to procure an aid which, by its example, would be as important as its valor; disciplined, gallant, pregnant with science and experience; that of allies who would preserve the good, and polish the rough points of our character. They would come to us as strangers, and leave us as friends, after sharing in our perils and elevating our destiny. Those were my objects; not to receive new taskmasters, but to expel old tyrants. And it was for these ends I sought aid from France; because France, even as enemy, could not be more implacable than the enemy already in the bosom of my country."
[The Court again interrupted the prisoner.]
"I have been charged with that importance in the effort to emancipate my country, as to be considered the key-stone of the combination of Irishmen, or as your lordship expressed it, ' the life and blood of the conspiracy.' You do me honor over much; you have given to the subaltern all the credit of a superior. There are men engaged in this conspiracy who are not only superior to me, but even to your own conception of yourself, my lord; men, before the splendor of whose genius and virtues I should bow with respectful deference, and whe would think themselves disgraced by shaking your blood-stained hand- $\qquad$ "









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 Faठ jab ठa m-bejocad beo.]

Lord Norbury-"You have endeavored to establish a wicked and bloody provisional government."
"What, my lord! shall you tell me, on the passage to the scaffold, which that tyranny, of which you are only the intermediary executioner, has erected for my murder, that I am accountable for all the blood that has been and will be shed in this struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor ?-shall you tell me this, and must I be so very a slave as not to repel it ?-I who fear not to approach the Omnipotent Judge to answer for the conduct of my whole life-am I to be appalled and falsified by a mere remnant of mortality here ?-by you, too, who if it were possible to collect all the innocent blood that you have shed, in your unhallowed ministry, in one great reservoir, your lordship might swim in it. Let no man dare, when I am dead, to charge me with dishonor; let no man attaint my memory, by believing that I could have engaged in any cause but that of my country's liberty and independence; or that I could have become the pliant minion of power, in the oppression and misery of my countrymen. The proclamation of the Provisional Government speaks for my views; no inference can be tortured from it to count nance barbarity or debasement at home, or subjection, humiliation, or treachery from abroad. I would not have submitted to a foreign oppressor, for the same reason that I would resist the domestic tyrant. In the dignity of freedom, I would have fought upon the threshold of my comentry, and its enemy should only enter by pasing over my lifeless corpse. And am I, who have lived but for my country, who have subjected myself to the dangers of the jealous and watchful oppressor, and now to the bondage of the grave,-only to give my countrymen their rights, and my country her independence,--am I to be loaded with calumny, and not suffered to resent it? No; God forbid!"
[Here Lord Norbury told the prisoner that his sentiments and language disgraced his family and his education, but more particularly his father. who, if alive, would not countenance such opinions.[

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"If the spirits of the illustrious dead participate in the concerns and cares of those who were dear to them in this transitory life, 0 ever dear and venerated shade of my departed father, look down with scrutiny upon the conduct of your suffering son, and see if I have, even for a moment, deviated from those principles of morality and patriotism which it was your care to instil into my youthful mind, and for which I am now about to offer up my life. My lord, you seem impatient for the sacrifice. The blood for which you thirst is not congealed by the artificial terrors which surround your victim; it circulates warmly and unruffled through the channels which God created for nobler purposes, but which you are now bent to destroy, for purposes so grievous that they cry to Heaven. Be yet patient! I have but a few words to say. I am going to my cold and silent grave; my lamp of life is nearly extinguished; my race is run; the grave opens to receive me, and I sink into its bosom. I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world; it is--THE CHARITY of its silence. Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me rest in obscurity and peace, and my tomb remain uninscribed until other times and other men can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my cpilaph be written. I have done."

## SPEECH

## OF

# R OBERT EMMET, 

IN THE

## COURT-HOUSE, DUBLIN,

AFTER SENTENCE OF DEATH BELNG PASSED ON HIM, SEPTEMBER 19, 1803.


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